

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 19, 2012

BRISTOL, Tenn. – Blake Alexander's inaugural appearance in Fuel Funny Car at Bristol Dragway's Ford Thunder Valley Nationals didn't exactly go as he hoped. A 16th qualifying position and first round loss to Bob Tasca was not what he dreamed of when he raced here in Junior Dragsters. Blake is the first to admit that there is room for improvement.

"There are things that we need to do as a team to take the next step on Sunday, but we started to make improvements after Atlanta. They're still trying to figure a few more things out to make our car pick up the three to five hundredths that we need to be a little more competitive on Sunday. I need to get a little better as a driver and we need to just be running a little faster," said the 23-year old college student.

Blake and the Gates/Auto Service Plus Funny Car ended the first qualifying session with an 8th-best 4.215. He ultimately improved to a 4.188, but slipped down to the bump spot at 16th. As first round of eliminations rolled around, Paul Smith's tune-up proved to be too much for the hot, oily track. Blake struck the tires down track and coasted through the finish line.

"The cloud cover on Sunday produced some of the best conditions since the Friday night session, so we needed to step it up. Our lane (left) still had gear oil on it from a previous oildown, so it wasn't very good at 300 feet," Blake said, after he was eliminated early, along with multiple Funny Car veterans.

Though the weekend didn't go as he had planned, Alexander is still happy to be piloting a nitro-gulping 300 mph Funny Car. The rookie said he was so focused on the task at hand that he still hasn't taken in the fact that his childhood dream is realized. "This is something that I've always wanted to do, but once I was out there doing it, it takes so much focus to do stuff right that I couldn't think about it. I'm sure as time goes by, I'll be able to think about it fondly from an outside perspective."

Blake Alexander's next race on the NHRA Full Throttle Series tour is the Summit Racing Equipment NHRA Nationals in Norwalk, Ohio, July 5-8. The familiar Auto Service Plus body will be back on the Paul Smith Racing Funny Car.

About Gates:

Gates Corporation (gates.com) is one of the world's leading manufacturers of industrial and automotive products, systems and components with operations in 30 countries. Gates maintains sales and marketing operations in every major industrial and automotive market, including North and South America, Europe, Asia, Australia and the Middle East.

Gates is part of the Industrial & Automotive group of Tomkins Ltd., which is owned by a consortium comprising Onex Corporation and the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board. Tomkins enjoys strong market positions and technical leadership across all of its business activities and owns some of the best-known brands in their respective markets.

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Blake Alexander Racing is a company that was started and maintained by nitro funny car driver Blake Alexander while in college. Blake worked his way up from Jr. Dragsters through the competitive sportsman ranks, now achieving his goal of driving a professional Nitro Funny Car. Through his efforts on and off the track, Blake secures corporate sponsorships and works actively with each supporter to activate and stimulate their respective brands from market to market. Blake Alexander drives for iconic master tuner Paul Smith, who owns and operates Paul Smith Racing out of Boynton Beach, Florida.

Companies that support Blake Alexander Racing include: Auto Service Plus, Gates Rubber Company, Exide Batteries, Tenneco Automotive, Valvoline, Standard Motor Products, and Pro Jack Race Car Stands.

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